

September 23, 2009

To: NITC Commissioners
From: Anne Byers
Subject: Community Council Report

Developing Websites for Growth. The Developing Websites for Growth Program has provided assistance in developing content for effective community websites. The eleven communities selected to participate include Burwell, Butler County, Elwood, Gering, Grand Island, Laurel, Pender, Scribner, South Sioux City, St. Paul, and Valentine.

Participating communities have created website content committees. Through the year, each community has created a sitemap, worked on creating content, and 5 have launched new websites. Through an on-line evaluation, it was determined that the Websites for Growth project was helpful in establishing communication with community leaders who have a vested interest in the online presence. They have found that networking with local community leaders, exploring other websites, learning about new online tools through the webinars, and holding regular community meetings was most helpful. The number one benefit of this project is getting the website stakeholders together to talk about what is most important, sharing the research, and having them analyze who their target audience is and what information they may be searching for.

Obstacles to accomplishing the project included time commitment involved, cost involved in creating an on-line presence and lack of understanding, lack of defined roles for committee members, fear of hurting current web developer and security issues.

The program is also sponsoring an award program. Nebraska communities that have created effective community websites can apply for one of four Websites for Growth Awards. Awards will be made in four categories: Population less than 2,500, Population greater than 2,500, Most Creative Website, and Best Use of Web Applications. Award nominations need to be completed by October 1, 2009. The nomination form is available at www.neded.org/ncip. Awards will be presented at the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) Awards Banquet, November 6.

Project partners include the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, University of Nebraska Extension, Nebraska Public Power District, AIM Institute, and Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council. The Websites for Growth project has been funded through a grant from the Nebraska Information Technology Commission's Community Technology Fund.

The final report from the project is included in the meeting documents.

Broadband Mapping Planning. The Nebraska Public Service Commission invited the NITC, Department of Economic Development, and University of Nebraska to submit a proposal to address regional technology planning as part of the Public Service Commission's Broadband Mapping proposal to the National Telecommunications Information Administration. Awards were originally scheduled to be announced Sept. 15, but the announcement has been delayed. As part of the proposed planning project, a statewide survey on Internet use and access will be done. The Community Council will serve as an advisory body to the project. Regional

technology plans and a statewide report will be presented to the NITC, Nebraska Public Service Commission, and Nebraska Department of Economic Development. The Broadband Mapping Planning effort will also serve as a vehicle for addressing any broadband issues that may arise in implementing statewide health information exchange.

New Member Nomination. Roger Hahn was nominated as a new member at the last Community Council meeting. We are asking you to approve his nomination.